



# Iwo Jima

By SEALs, Hortonville, WI

(Introduction) Iwo Jima. A small island in the south pacific, we have all heard of it. But do you know the truth about Bloody Iwo?

(Leaning on two ammo containers, with one arm resting on them, helmet tilted, grunting and groaning in pain throughout performance) I was 17 years old. John is my name. John DeShaney. 10 weeks ago I was trying on my suit for prom. Wondering when my girl and I would be married. Wondering if I was going to be called to war. How long boot camp would take. How long it would be till I was a father. Well now I lay here in a pool of my own blood, shot in the stomach by some Jap Sniper.

You know that nothing shocks you like a bullet hole in the morning. I was a lucky one. I would be able to leave the island early. The doc keeps telling me to hold on. Well that's not going to work. I have been holding on for about two hours. I have lost almost half of all my blood. The damage done is far beyond repair. Just laying here I have shot three of those Japs when they came running at me, bayonet in hand. Now as my last wish as a dying man is to tell you my story of what I did on Iwo Jima.

There we were. February 19 1945. I was part of 28th division of third Marines. We heard it was only going to take a week to ten days to take the island. I boarded a transport to the island. I remember the men in front of me puking out their guts on the transport on the way there. We could hear those Jap machine gun rounds hitting the door on the outside. I was standing there smoking a cigarette, happy that I wasn't the first man off the LST. Instead I was at the back, manning the machine gun. The one who was manning it before was shot. His brains splattered all over me. I threw his body down into the LST and got on that gun and gave them some hot lead. We all knew that the men in front were going to die. They always did, at least that's what the veterans said.

When we landed, the beaches were a graveyard of metal and human remains. Filled with multiple landing craft that was blown apart, and limbs of dead men. When we landed I could smell the scent of burning flesh. By the tenth day we had Suribachi and the 1st airfield. We couldn't sit in one spot for more then 10 minutes because the Japs might zero in on our position with their mortars. They might pop out of their underground tunnels. We thought that if the Japs didn't get us, the heat would. It was burning hot. The sand was over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. The heat itself was in the nineties and it was humid. I only saw a few Japs here. There weren't any Japs on Iwo Jima, they were in Iwo Jima. Our bombing raids from the past few months did nothing to their defense. The second we bombed them, they rebuilt what was destroyed.

No wonder since they have been building the defenses of the island since '44. Now when we landed on Iwo, we were pinned to the beaches. We had to climb up a 12 foot tall mountain of dirt. The brown sands of the island ran red with the blood of many men. The second we made it to the top, we got hosed with enemy machine gun fire. We slowly made our way across the island. On the first day we cut off Suribachi from the rest of the island. We only took about five hundred yards that first day. That day was the beginning of hell. The second day we started to make our way up Suribachi while the 4th and 5th Marines fought to the north. We had a hard time clearing out enemy pillboxes and foxholes.

We had machine gun fire coming down at us. We barely walked up that mountain. We crawled up it. We finally made it to the top, and we raised the first flag, on the sixth day. That one was barely talked about but those who fought on Iwo remember it. Now the famous picture of the six brave men raising the flag. Well that was the second flag we raised. You see we had the first flag as a souvenir for when or if we returned to the states. We had a sergeant come running up to us with another flag and everything. I stood on the edge well Ira Hayes, John Bradley, Franklin Sousley, Harlin Block, Michael Strank, and Rene Gagnon raised the flag. You know if you could ask John today he would just tell you that he was simply pitching in to help. John was just a simple medic for the Navy. He was a good one at that. We made our way down Suribachi, and fought to the north Northeast while 4th and 5th took the airfields. After they captured the airfields the Japs were behind us already from the underground tunnels they dug over the past few months. We slowly took a few hundred yards each day.

The Japs slowly blew apart their underground tunnels while we worked up the island. When 4th and 5th took the 1st airfield we started getting in more troops and more supplies by air. That was dangerous, with the Japs firing anti aircraft and mortars at the airfield and planes. I remember a B-29 that took off and barely made it through a curtain of anti aircraft fire. We kept on working up Iwo and we finally made it to, The Meat Grinder. The Meat Grinder was a group of hills that were filled with Jap pillboxes.

We would get torn apart every time we went in. I remember my CO running in to a Jap pillbox and coming out of it with his bayonet covered in blood and him yelling at us to keep moving forward. He ran into another pillbox and shot three Japs dead and wounded another with his pistol. He then stabbed the wounded one with his bayonet. He went after another pillbox and a mortar blew off both his legs and arms. But he kept yelling at us to keep going, he was hands down one of the bravest men on Iwo. I saw many men cry that day because he was dead. He was my favorite CO. He was my fifth one that week. I would have 18 here.

Now we were only on day fifteen of our campaign on Iwo. We had about fifteen thousand dead and only about thirteen

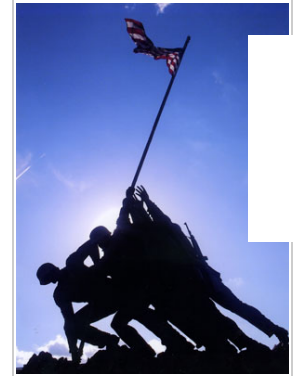


Image Credit: James M., Glendale, AZ

thousand Japs dead. We had only half of the 2nd airfield taken. We were winning yet we were losing. Winning by land but losing by loses. When I took a leave from the front lines for a day I helped the bombers unload and load their planes. It was the only time I could get away from watching my comrades die.

When I returned to the front lines, I saw the most deaths. I saw my best friend get pulled into a Jap hole. He screamed and yelled at the top of his lungs for help. I started to pull him out but a Jap pulled his pin on a grenade, blowing up the entire hole. The Japs did that a lot. With an oath to their emperor that they would kill 10 Marines for every one Jap. I myself shot a Jap here and thought he was dead. I walked over to his body and he was bleeding out, seeming to be begging for help. He had a grenade behind his back. He popped up and pulled the pin. I shot him, then threw my helmet on the grenade and ran.

I got a piece of shrapnel stuck in my leg, and was put on a ship a few miles out. I hated that. I let them fix me up. And after they did that, a few other marines and I snuck out and got on a transport to Iwo and rejoined our platoon. We worked more and more up the island and till we were out of The Meat Grinder. Arguably we lost most of our men during the taking of The Meat Grinder.

We finally got most of the island taken. We had about 700 yards left to take. That was Kuribayashi's last stand. With General Kuribayashi telling his men to fight for their lives. They fought alright. It was the battle of The Gorge. The Gorge was a giant trench. They had only a few hundred men left. They got their defenses ready practically overnight for the onslaught headed their way. 5th Marines were the group that took The Gorge. I was lucky enough to get transferred to them.

That leads us to now. That's were my story ends. I am dying, slowly bleeding out. I can see this bright light. Its ether heaven or the sun. I'm not sure. I never really put my faith in up above. But now I hope that there is someone up above to take me. But I digress. I am sorry if I hurt anyone in my time. I never wanted to hurt the ones who cared. All this time I thought that I would live and just grow old. I had a girl at home. Tell her I sung my last song today. Thank you for being the last people I see before I die. Thank you for listening to my story. Tell the Lord to keep his light on for me. I'm free.  
(Arm goes limp, eyes close slowly, and head slowly falls to side)

(Stands up)

Thesis Statement

Iwo Jima revolutionized warfare drastically. It was not a battle of seeing the enemy, but that of napalm and hand grenades. It made our government react by thinking twice about attacking the Japanese main land. The reform was that of how we would defend against invasions and how we would have to be prepared for anything. Their Defenses were nothing our troops had ever experienced. In our corps, without the responsibility and discipline, we would not have been able to win the battle of Iwo Jima.



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